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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this workshop was to review research needs already identified, to determine other areas in which research needs are not being met, and to establish priorities among these areas. The recommendations which were made on subjects such as part-time employment, career patterns, upward mobility, and equal pay form a broad base on which research projects of benefit to women can be developed. Specific research and action recommendations were made for each of the following seven topics presented as papers: (1) "Barriers to Entry and Reentry into the Labor Force," (2) "Part-Time Work and Flexible Hours Employment," (3) "The Earnings Gap: Research Needs and Issues," (4) "Barriers to Promotion and Upward Mobility," (5) "Minority Group Women," (6) "The Conditions of Women in Blue-Collar, Industrial, and Service Jobs: A Review of Research and Proposals for Research, Action, and Policy," (7) "Upward Mobility for Private Household Workers." (Texts of the papers are not included in this report.) Three of the general recommendations made apply to the full scope of research: (1) All data in research projects should be collected and tabulated by sex, race, and ethnicity, (2) a clearinghouse of research on women should be established, and (3) provision should be made for "think research" to develop new and different ways of studying the issues. (TA)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ADMINISTRATION
Women's Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20210

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Results of WORKSHOP ON RESEARCH NEEDED TO IMPROVE THE EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY OF WOMEN

The Workshop on Research Needed To Improve the Employment and Employability of Women provided the framework for a fruitful interchange of ideas on research needs relating to women. The meeting was called to review research needs already identified, to determine other areas in which research needs are not being met, and to establish priorities among these areas. The many recommendations which were made--on such subjects as part-time employment, career patterns, upward mobility, and equal pay--form a broad base on which research projects of benefit to women can be developed.

About 80 persons attended the workshop, including representatives from government as well as non-government agencies. Papers were presented on the following subjects:*

1. "Barriers to Entry and Reentry Into the Labor Force," by Dr. Carol L. Jusenius, Research Associate, Ohio State University, and Dr. Steven H. Sandell, Assistant Professor of Economics and Research Associate, Ohio State University.

2. "Part-Time Work and Flexible Hours Employment," by Carol S. Greenwald, Assistant Vice President and Economist, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.

3. "The Earnings Gap: Research Needs and Issues," by Isabel V. Sawhill, Senior Research Associate, Urban Institute.

4. "Barriers to Promotion and Upward Mobility," by Dr. Phyllis Wallace, Visiting Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Note.--The workshop was sponsored by the Women's Bureau on June 7, 1974, with the support of the Employment and Training Administration (formerly Manpower Administration).

* The papers presented at the workshop do not necessarily reflect the views of the Labor Department. A limited number of copies are available from the Women's Bureau upon request, except the paper "Barriers to Promotion and Upward Mobility," of which no copies are available.

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5. "Minority Group Women," by Patricia Cayo Sexton, Professor of Sociology, New York University.

6. "The Conditions of Women in Blue-Collar, Industrial, and Service Jobs: A Review of Research and Proposals for Research, Action, and Policy" by Pamela Roby, Associate Professor of Sociology and Community Studies, University of California at Santa Cruz.

7. "Upward Mobility for Private Household Workers," by Dr. David Chaplin, Department of Sociology, Western Michigan University.

During the workshop a number of recommendations were made on research relating to women, and were subsequently classified into three major groups:

General Recommendations
Research Items
Action Items

As a followup of the workshop, participants were asked for their input on priorities to be attached to these recommendations by indicating either 1 (High), 2 (Medium), or 3 (Low) for each of the General, Research, and Action Items.

About three-fourths of the workshop participants responded. Of the 59 returned ratings, 47 were tabulated. The remaining 12 did not have sufficient information for tabulating. Most of the respondents attached either a high or medium rating to each of the recommendations. A synopsis of the findings follows.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Three of the general recommendations made by the participants apply to the full scope of research. These were as follows:

--All data in research projects should be collected and tabulated by sex, race, and ethnicity.

--A clearinghouse of research on women should be established.

--Provision should be made for "think research" to develop new and different ways of studying the issues.

In addition, the participants expressed the hope that efforts would be made to implement the Full Employment Act of 1946, since unemployment usually has a disproportionate effect on women and minorities.

Closely allied to these broad recommendations were the participants' hopes for:

--Elimination of sex/race bias in research design, implemenatation, and reporting;

--Provision of a facilitating agency to bring together researchers and companies to focus on and monitor the experience of newly introduced measures such as women's penetration into occupations in which men predominate, promotion policies, or flexible work schedules.

RESEARCH AND ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Barriers to Entry and Reentry Into the Labor Force

Women's participation in the labor force continues to grow. About 45 percent of all women 16 years of age and over were in the labor force in 1973 (46.3 percent in 1975), compared with only 32 percent a quarter of a century ago. Projections indicate continued growth in women's labor force participation.

Barriers exist on both the demand and supply sides to confront women in their efforts to enter or reenter the labor force. For example:

--Some women returnees may have skills that are rusty or obsolescent.

--Some working mothers may lack necessary child care services.

--Some women may face discriminatory practices of employers who do not wish to hire women for certain jobs.

The workshop participants made recommendations in several areas to ease the entrance of women into the labor force and gainful employment. They expressed concerns related to research on skills--their obsolescence, transferability where supply exceeds the demand, and the applicability of skills acquired in volunteer activities to labor market requirements. Other recommendations were in the areas of new jobs needed to meet changing social conditions, the impact of continuing education programs, and evaluation of the preparation and dissemination of information on employment opportunities for women and girls.

With respect to child care, the workshop participants recommended a study of the need for such services as well as a resurvey of child care arrangements of working mothers. (The latest comprehensive survey by the Federal Government was based on 1964 data. It was cosponsored by the Department of Labor and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and the results were published in "Child Care Arrangements of Working Mothers in the United States.") The economics of labor force

participation of women, or the updating of research on the relationship between the earnings of women and their labor force participation was another topic proposed for research.

Recommendations for ACTION were:

--Change employer's perceptions of women's capabilities, especially their attitudes toward women (cited also in research item No. 4, discussed later).

--Change women's perceptions of their own capabilities and potential and their attitudes toward the advancement of other women (cited also in research item No. 4, discussed later).

--Support the movement of women into nontraditional jobs with the use of role models, "buddy" systems, publicity, etc.

--Develop a national core of emergency home health care workers as part of our medical insurance program.

2. Part-Time Work and Flexible Hours Employment

A part-time workday or a rearrangement of the regular working hours may be more convenient for some women in meeting their obligations and commitments. In recent years, interest has increased with regard to the possible benefits accruing to both employees and employers of less rigid working schedules. This has resulted in experiments in part-time work and flexible hours scheduling by both private industry and government.

A keen interest was displayed in this subject by the workshop participants. The difficulty women have in finding part-time professional employment and the need to show that a variety of jobs can be handled on a part-time basis were pointed out. Also noted was the necessity for research in the area of the benefits that will accrue to firms as they expand options for women in part-time or flexible hours employment.

Recognizing the limitations which exist with regard to the availability of part-time employment, the workshop participants suggested research on:

--Characteristics of current part-time occupational groups and identification of other jobs with similar prospects;

--Productivity, absenteeism, and labor turnover among part-time workers.

3. The Earnings Gap: Research Needs and Issues

Although women's participation in the labor force continues to increase, a gap persists in their earnings relative to those of men. For example, in 1973 the median earnings of year-round full-time women workers were only $6,335, 56.6 percent of the $11,186 earned by men. (In 1974, women's earnings of $6,772 were 57.2 percent of the $11,835 earned by men.) Moreover, this gap has widened in recent years. In 1955, earnings of women were 63.9 percent of those of men.

Many studies have been conducted on the reasons for the earnings differential. Women, on the average, have had fewer years of work-life experience than men have had. Furthermore, the concentration of women in certain low-wage industries and occupations is a primary factor in their lower earnings level. In addition, women receive less overtime than their male counterparts. However, studies have also shown that a differential between the earnings of men and women exists even after adjustments for these and other factors such as education, age, and region.

As another avenue toward investigating the earnings gap, the workshop participants recommended a study of the relationship between the length and variety of work experience and advancement of women in the Federal Government. In addition, updating of current studies on worklife expectancy of women as well as a study of absenteeism and labor turnover in selected industries were recommended.

A recommendation for ACTION was:

--Better enforcement of Federal legislation relating to both equal pay and sex discrimination.

4. Barriers to Promotion and Upward Mobility

How can EQUAL ACCESS to jobs be made a reality for women and minorities?

Extensive legislation enacted in recent years prohibits sex and race discrimination in most public and private employment. These laws were needed to assure that women and minorities, long denied equal access to better paying jobs and advancement opportunities, were given the opportunity for equal employment.

The workshop participants recommended research relating to the documentation and assessment of the implementation of the court decision in the AT&T (American Telephone and Telegraph) case and the steel industry consent decree, with emphasis on the effect on career mobility. Another area recommended for research was the impact of sex discrimination lawsuits on the individual, in terms of psychological reaction and social penalties.

Other areas recommended for research to improve promotion opportunities and advancement for women included analysis of:

--Career patterns of successful women and men--white and minority--in the professional and managerial fields;

--Upward mobility in blue-collar and service work;

--Employment patterns for female and male graduates of management training programs for business careers;

--Relationship between women's aspirations and their expectations with respect to occupational achievement;

--Impact on women's career advancement due to membership in professional organizations or women's organizations or caucuses, and the impact of the women's movement on minority women.

Recommendations for ACTION were:

--Change employer's perception of women's capabilities, especially their attitudes toward minority women.

--Change women's perception of their own capabilities and potential and their attitudes toward the advancement of other women.

--Make women, especially minority women, aware of occupational choices and legal remedies.

--Correlate occupational alternatives with training/counseling, for jobs at all levels.

5. Minority Group Women

The concerns of minority women, who often must face the double barriers of race and sex discrimination, were expressed in several recommendations by the participants. Although the occupational distribution of minority women has improved in recent years, their median wage or salary income continues to be lower than that of other workers--only $3,978 in 1973 ($4,751 in 1974).

One of the recommendations related to an analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey made by the Ohio State University as it relates to the labor force activity and upward mobility of black teenage girls. Young women of minority races experience extremely high unemployment rates--34.5 percent in 1973 (38.5 percent in 1975).

Another recommendation concerned a review of literature relating to Chicana, Puerto Rican, and other Spanish-origin women in order to identify barriers to their labor force activity, employment, and advancement.

Additional areas of research and action relating to minority women were suggested in several of the other categories.

Recommendations for ACTION were:

--Make special efforts to involve minority women in research and grant programs, advisory committees, workshops, and conferences.

--Teach English as a second language to Spanish-speaking and other newly immigrated women.

6. The Conditions of Women in Blue-Collar, Industrial, and Service Jobs: A Review of Research and Proposals for Research, Action, and Policy

About 1 out of 6 women workers was employed in a blue-collar job in 1973 (1 out of 7 in 1975), but most were operatives and few were employed in the better-paying skilled crafts. However, women's share of occupations in the skilled crafts is improving somewhat, having increased from 3.1 percent of all such jobs in 1960 to 5.0 percent in 1970 (but declining slightly to 4.6 percent in 1975).

In expressing particular interest in the working conditions for women in blue-collar and service work, the workshop participants recommended a study of:

--Occupational health hazards in blue-collar and service jobs--the myths and the realities for women workers;

--The suitability of tools and equipment for women;

--The barriers women face because of lack of informal assistance from other workers.

Additionally, in the discussion of barriers to promotions and upward mobility, the workshop participants suggested case studies of women's entrance into blue-collar and service jobs in selected geographic areas.

7. Upward Mobility for Private Household Workers

The proportion of women employed in private household work continues to decline, having dropped to about 4 percent in 1973 from about 9 percent a decade ago. (The proportion was 3.4 percent in 1975.)

Minority women represented nearly two-fifths of all women in such jobs (38.8 percent in 1973 and 38.3 percent in 1975). However, the proportion of minority women who are employed in household work has decreased markedly--13 percent in 1973 compared with 33 percent in 1964. (Their proportion was 10.6 percent in 1975.)

The median wage or salary income of private household workers who work year round full time remains dismally low--only $2,243 in 1973 ($2,732 in 1974). Coverage of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) was extended to private household workers in 1974, bringing those workers under the minimum wage and overtime provisions.

A study of the impact on both employers and employees of the inclusion of private household workers under FLSA coverage was recommended by the workshop participants. Another research recommendation dealt with the need to evaluate the assistance and value to workers and employers of the operation of private household employment businesses.

A recommendation for ACTION was:

--Improve the systems of dissemination of information to women, both in and out of the labor force, with particular regard to the recent coverage of private household workers under the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

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The research needs identified by the workshop participants cover a broad range of subjects of importance to women, particularly women who work. The Women's Bureau recognizes, however, that other areas of attention exist and that new issues of concern continue to come forth, representing challenging areas for exploration in efforts to improve the employment and employability of women.

Hopefully, research on the subjects outlined here, as well as on those yet unidentified areas, will provide a broad and sound data base on which effective programs and policies to meet the needs of women can be formulated.